

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8258

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 18499

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, UR

SUBJ: SOVIET VIEWS OF CHINA

REF: A. PEKING 2473

B. HONG KONG 15181

1. DUE TO THE NEW YEAR HOLIDAYS HERE WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE THUS FAR TO CONTACT SOVIET OFFICIALS WHO DEAL WITH CHINA FOR THEIR VIEWS ON THE RELEASE OF THE HELICOPTER CREW. HOWEVER, SHORTLY BEFORE THAT EVENT (DEC 22), EMBOFF ASKED IGOR ROGACHEV (NOW HEAD OF THE ASIA BRANCH OF THE MFA'S POLICY PLANNING DIVISION) ABOUT THE RANGE OF OPINION AMONG SOVIET POLICY MAKERS ON CHINA, AND SPECIFICALLY WHETHER THERE WERE ANY "DOVES" ARGUING FOR A SOFTER LINE. ROGACHEV REPLIED FIRMLY, "NO, THERE ARE NONE ON THAT SIDE, BUT THERE ARE SOME ON THE OTHER SIDE." EMBOFF THEN ASKED HOW THE VIEWS OF THESE "HAWKS" ARE
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HANDLED. ROGACHEV BACKTRACKED, SAYING THAT THERE ARE NOT MANY

WHO HOLD SUCH VIEWS AND THAT "ALL" SUPPORT THE PRESENT SOVIET POLICY.

2. COMMENT. WE AGREE WITH THE EXCELLENT ANALYSES FROM HONG KONG AND PEKING (REFTELS) ON THE TIMING AND MOTIVATION FOR PEKING'S DECISION, INCLUDING THE POSSIBILITY THAT IT WAS AIMED AT UNDERMINING SOVIET HARDLINERS DURING THE BUILDUP TO THE PARTY CONGRESS IN FEBRUARY. IF AN ANTI-PEKING PLANK IN THE PROPOSED EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTY CONFERENCE IS STILL AN ACTIVE ISSUE IN ECPC PREPARATIONS--AND THE CHINESE MAY NOT BE SURE--THIS MOVE MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN DESIGNED TO WEAKEN SUPPORT FOR IT. IN VIEW OF ROGACHEV'S REMARKS, HOWEVER, WE REMAIN DOUBTFUL THAT IT WILL LEAD TO ANY FUNDAMENTAL REASSESSMENT OF SOVIET POLICY, AT LEAST BEFORE THE TWO SIDES GO FORWARD WITH FURTHER MUTUAL GESTURES. END COMMENT.

3. IN OTHER MORE GENERAL REMARKS, ROGACHEV SAID THAT HE THOUGH THE RECENT DISCUSSION OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN CHINA WAS HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT AND HE SUGGESTED THAT THOSE WHO ARGUE FOR A RETURN TO ACADEMIC NORMS WILL PREVAIL, WHILE DUE LIP SERVICE IS PAID TO MAOIST PRINCIPLES. HE THOUGHT SUCH "REVISIONIST" PATTERNS OF "USING MAO'S THOUGHTS TO SUPPORT NON-MAOISTS PRACTICES" WAS ALREADY UNDERWAY AND WOULD BE THE STANDARD APPROACH IN THE EARLY SUCCESSION YEARS.

4. ON CHOU EN-LAI'S LONG ABSENCE AND ILLNESS, ROGACHEV SAID THAT THE ILLNESS MAY BE GENUINE ENOUGH, BUT HE HINTED DARKLY THAT ONE COULD NOT BE SURE ABOUT THE CAUSES. MAO HAD FOUND NUMEROUS NOVEL WAYS TO "GET RID OF" HIS MOST POWERFUL SUBORDINATES, SAID ROGACHEV, INCLUDING HIS ATTEMPT TO POISON WANG MING IN THE 30'S.
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